



# Author's **BAZAAR** ONLINE

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**By Dean Rea**

Creating a short story ranks among the most difficult creative writing tasks. Ask the 12 high school students in a class I am teaching this spring at a private academy.

We spent the first trimester writing narrative and the second trimester writing point-of-view essays. Then our lives became complicated as we attempted to create a protagonist and to resolve a conflict in 2,000 to 4,000 words.

The major problem developed in the middle section of the story where the protagonist copes with increasingly difficult problems before the conflict is resolved. We'll see

how well the students cobble together their stories during May.

Meanwhile, I'll stick with non-fiction. I prefer to gather, organize and write a news or feature story because that's what I have been doing for nearly eight decades.

Fortunately, *Author's Bazaar* continues to be graced by contributions from people who enjoy writing fiction, poems, articles and essays and taking photographs.

Mil Misisic, a newcomer to this online hobby journal, learned about *Author's Bazaar* from Barry Schrader, who lives in the same retirement center. She is a senior widow who enjoys writing, especially letters-to-the editor, which have appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and in her local newspaper during the past 25 years.

Meanwhile, if you wish to know how a real writer writes, read Dave Griffin's piece.

# A Real Writer

By David Griffin

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Someone asked me the other day if I am a real writer. I said I didn't think so. A real writer in the past would have smoked a pipe and possibly lived in a castle. Or at least in a mountain-top aerie, away in a far-off land.

In modern times, a real writer might live half way up a concrete canyon in Manhattan. He would wear a presentable cardigan sweater as he sat at his computer. I have a cardigan sweater, and I wear it on cold days when my wife allows it, but not if company is coming. It's pretty ratty. But it's always been special to me since a nice older lady on the street put a quarter in my hand while I was wearing it. I tell folks it taught me humility, but what it really said to me was there are lots of different ways to make money.

Of course I don't live in a castle. I live in an old house on a country road. It's not as old as a castle, and we have central heat and indoor plumbing. I've always been pretty

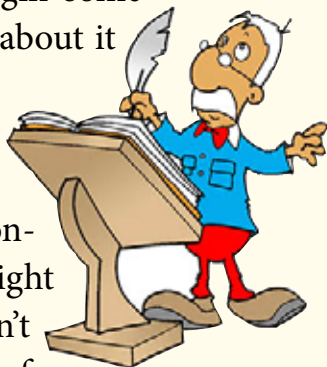
fond of indoor plumbing and wouldn't want to be without it. It's such a long walk across the backfield to the woods that I don't think I'd get very much writing done without at least a half bath. King Arthur could use the castle window, but my wife would be aghast if I tried that.

Real writers begin their task by constructing an outline, often before writing the first sentence of the story. I usually write the last sentence first. Or begin somewhere in the middle. Or just think about it all day.

Real writers limit their expository paragraphs, check their facts, use that Thessa thing and a dictionary. Some proceed to write in a straight line. I never check anything and don't know what I'm talking about most of

the time. No one ever corrects me. My facts are either flawless or simply convincing. Or I don't have any readers.

Real writers have an editor to spruce up their prose. I read my stuff to my wife's dog Tapioca and usually don't get an argument from her. I thought twice before writing the last sentence because I don't want to be accused of animal mental cruelty. I've always had a feeling the damned dog wouldn't testify favorably on my behalf. She envies any at-



tention I get from my wife and follows me everywhere as if her assignment were to watch me like a hawk. She's not much of an editor, however. For a Golden Retriever, she's barely literate.

Real writers use proper punctuation and don't write run-on sentences. I don't know anything about punctuation, but I just love run-on sentences because they're so efficient and I don't need to add extra pronouns or think up synonyms to avoid repeats, and I can forget all those silly rules that Sister Clementia taught me back in fifth grade, and better known writers than me don't seem to worry about it so why should I.

Real writers are famous. Now, there I come closer to the definition. For I am indeed famous if only a tiny bit. I take my articles down to the copy shop and have hundreds made. At one time I stuffed them in the mailboxes of unsuspecting residents up and down the road. I stopped the practice after a run-in with the U.S. Postal Service.

Last week I decided to hand deliver my masterpieces by knocking on doors. I reckoned each visit would be an opportunity to converse with a neighbor who for reasons unknown no longer spoke to me. Tapioca mulled it over and decided to come along.

Hardly anyone answered their door even though sounds

of life were often evident from within the house. A few people did greet me, however, including Mrs. Grant, who opened her door naked and drunk, evidently thinking it was Halloween. She wore only a wizard's hat and carried a tray of Halloween candy. In her inebriated state, she pronounced a sentence or two with one long slurring sound. It reminded me of something else real writers are known for. Typos.

"I believe you've forgotten your Magic Robe, ma'm," I said with grace and concern. Her eyes widened, and she glanced down. Tapioca huffed a dog laugh. Mrs. Grant raised and lowered the tray as she tried to decide what to cover. I did not know a person could blush from stem to stern. She raised a foot and an orange painted toenail pushed the door toward me.

"Sorry to have disturbed your bath, ma'm," I called out as the door closed. From inside came a tittering, then an exploding laugh. Tapioca and I looked at each other. I thought to ring the doorbell once more but resisted. That damned dog follows me everywhere.





## Fading Into History

This photograph taken in Eastern Oregon by William "Bill" Haynes is one of five in a show titled, "Fading Into History: Oregon Rural Structures." The Eugene, Oregon, photographer, took the images in the John Day area during a three-day trip in April. [wahaynes3511@comcast.net](mailto:wahaynes3511@comcast.net)



# HORNED TOAD

By Sheryl L. Nelms  
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he rears  
out of the desert fluff grass

skitters across  
my shoe

pauses  
like

a petrified triceratops

I squat  
wiggle his spiked tail

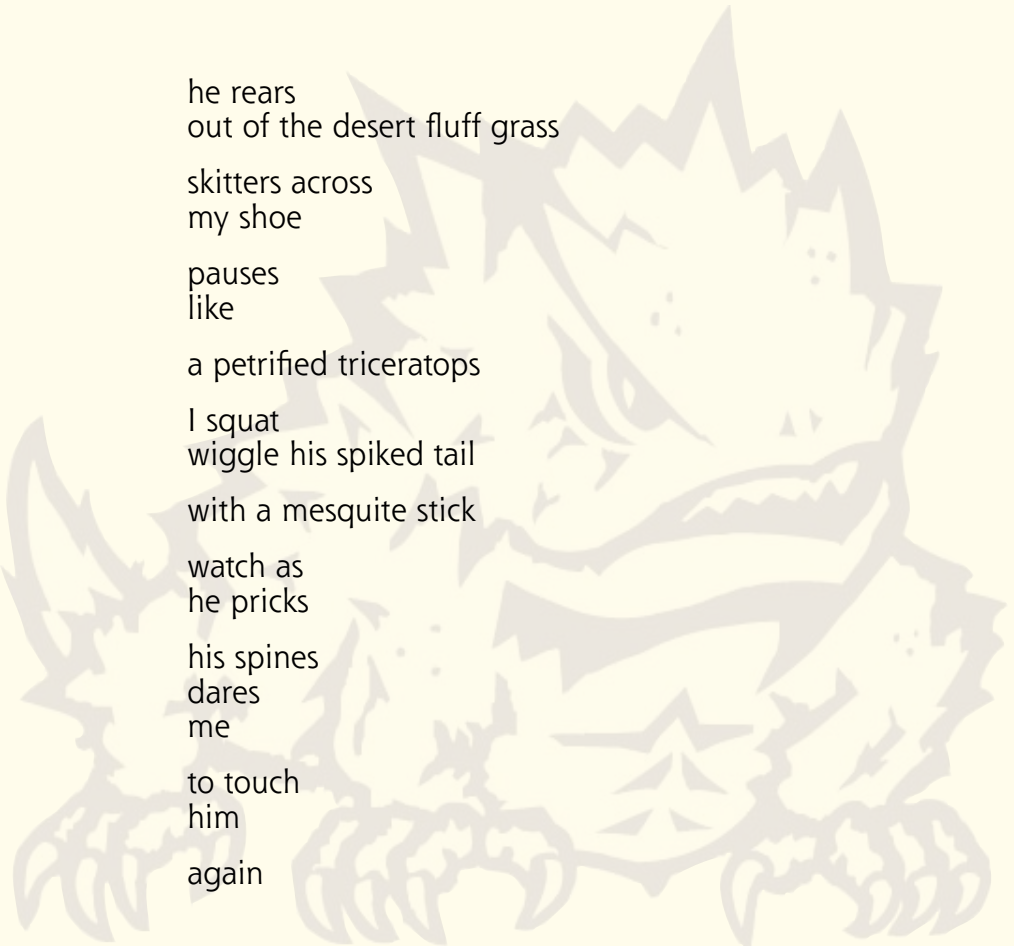
with a mesquite stick

watch as  
he pricks

his spines  
dares  
me

to touch  
him

again



# The Paper Clip Caper

By Mil Misisic

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I am down to about three paper clips in my home office. Where did they go? It brought back memories of when I was employed. I was picking up supplies one day in the office supply room when a co-worker walked by.

Seeing the box of paper clips in my hand, he remarked, “Why do we ever have to replenish our supply of paper clips? No one ever throws one away. They should be constantly re-circulating throughout the office.”

“Good point, Bob,” I replied. “Why don’t you and I see if we can unravel this mystery?”

“Nope, sorry,” was his smug reply. “I’m an old Army intelligence officer, and I don’t work with amateurs.”

I whipped out my old IRS badge, bearing my secret code name, “\$.001. (Get it? My name is mil with a small “m,” — it’s a tenth of a cent) and said, “With whom do you think you’re dealing?”

I could see he was somewhat impressed, and though not totally convinced of my sleuthing talents, he agreed to meet me while the office staff was out to lunch.

At first, we found nothing amiss in the first cubicle, but, as we were leaving, I observed, “Do you notice anything strange about those framed snapshots on the wall, Bob?”

“Yes,” he agreed. “Those are the weirdest looking kids I’ve ever seen.”

“No, no, you ninny,” I exclaimed. “I mean how crookedly they are hung?”

Taking down one of the framed snapshots and turning it over, we saw that crude picture hooks had been fashioned from bent paper clips.

“There’s part of our answer,” I said. “Flagrant misuse of five paper clips. They’ll never be used as paper clips again.”

Moving on to a secretary’s desk. Bob could find no violations, but, as a fellow secretary, I knew just where to look. I took out the removable tray in the middle drawer and exposed an 18-inch necklace made out of linked paper clips. By this time, Bob knew he was working with a real pro.

As we passed the photocopier in various stages of disassembly, we heard the repairman cry out, “Why do people always leave paper clips on the photocopier? There’s your problem,” he said, pointing into the bowels of the machine. Three twisted, almost-beyond-recognition paper clips were stuck in the mechanism.

We continued our search of the cubicles, looking under keyboards of the computers, file boxes, etc. “Don’t forget the corners of the desk blotter holders, “I reminded Bob.

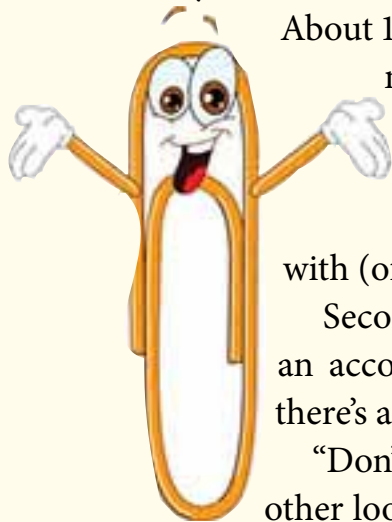
“Boy! You do know your stuff,” he grudgingly admitted.

About 12:55 p.m., we had accounted for a large number of unorthodox uses of paper clips. Just as we were tallying them up, a co-worker came limping in with the straps of her sandals held together with (of all things) a paper clip.

Seconds later, Bob pointed excitedly at an accountant returning to his desk, “Look, there’s a man with a sterling silver toothpick.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” I chided. “Take another look. It’s a straightened paper clip.” (Another paper clip that would never hold two pieces of paper together.)

By now, he was so impressed that all he could murmur



was, “Wow!”

One cubicle remained to be searched. Everything looked normal. Or was it? Why was the desk locked?

“Step back,” Bob said. “I’ll have that open in a second.”

“Bob,” I shouted, “what are you doing?”

“I’m picking the lock,” he calmly replied.

“But what are you using?” I shrieked.

“Oh, my gosh,” he moaned, “a paper clip.”

Case closed.



## Rocky History

After picking up rocks and hauling them off fields each spring in the Ozark Hills of Missouri, Dean Rea vowed to never look another rock in the face. A half-century later with a contrite heart and knowing he wouldn't have to pick them up before plowing in the spring, he took this photograph of a rock pile on the Oregon Coast.

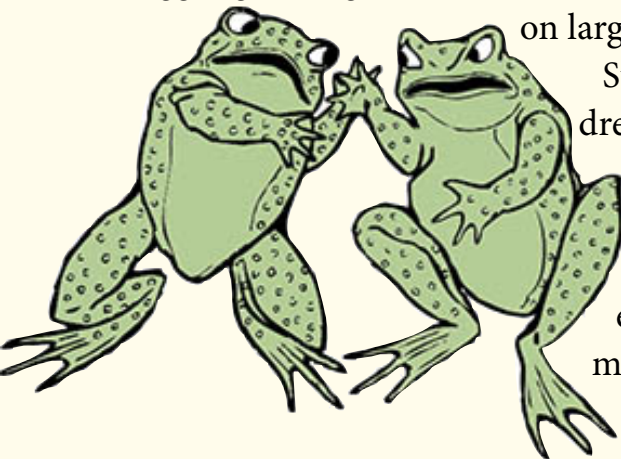
# The Quiet, Simple Life of Frogs

By Les Gapay

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Once upon a time there were two frogs named Sunshine and Squiggy, and they were very much in love. They were as happy as clams.

They lived in an idyllic frog world on Farmer Brown's large pond eating tasty insects, swimming in the pond, squiggling through the warm mud and basking in the sun on large rocks.



Sunshine and Squiggy dreamed of getting married and raising a host of tadpoles at their quiet little pond. Every day they would admire each others' smooth



skin, webbed feet and bulging eyes. Then they would leap around together.

Farmer Brown's land was a peaceful spot and a good place to raise a family of frogs. It was unlike the faraway places Squiggy and Sunshine had heard of where there were large threatening animals and hordes of human beings.

The two frogs had a very sheltered existence until one day a menacing looking scorpion with claws and a large tail came by. "Will you carry me across the pond on your back?" the scorpion asked Squiggy. "If I do you will sting me, and I will die," replied Squiggy. "No," said the scorpion. "I just want to get across the pond. If I sting you, then I will drown and die, too."

Squiggy thought for a while and said, "All right, I will take you across the pond," and he let the scorpion climb onto his back. When they reached the center of the pond, the scorpion stung Squiggy with his poisonous tail. "But now you will drown and die too," said Squiggy. "I know," said the scorpion." Squiggy added in his dying breath: "Then why did you do it?" Replied the scorpion: "I can't help it. I'm a scorpion. It's in my nature."

Sunshine watched from the shore as her lover gasped his last and as his body floated slowly to the shore on the

waves fanned by a gentle breeze. She stared at his body on the mud of the shore and began to cry.

Suddenly, a large toad came by. He was big and ugly and covered with warts — a loathsome and contemptible looking sort. He wore a top hat and carried a long sleek black stick. “I am the witch’s toad,” he said, “and have learned some magic to bring your friend back to life.”

Sunshine’s huge bulging eyes brightened. “But,” said the toad, “I will need something in return.” Sunshine looked glum. “What?” she asked. “I want your love,” said the toad. “Never,” replied Sunshine. “Squiggy is my true love. I would rather die too than be with you.”

With that, a wicked look came across the toad’s face. He waved his stick like a magic wand, took off his top hat and pulled various potions from it. “Double bubble, toil and trouble,” he said. “Hey, hey your friend will pay.”

With a poof Squiggy’s body began to come alive and to change and grow. Gradually it formed into a human being, a man six feet tall, first with webbed feet and rubber-like skin. Squiggy looked like a frog man. But the body continued to change and soon Squiggy had a completely human looking body.

Squiggy and Sunshine looked at each other — she so tiny and amphibian like and he so big and human. They

looked at where the toad had stood to cry out in alarm, but he was gone.

Squiggy sat on the bank of the pond with Sunshine perched in his hand. They tried to talk to each other, but when Squiggy spoke only human words came out, and when Sunshine opened her mouth only croaks were to be heard.

Suddenly, a beautiful butterfly came by and landed on Squiggy's knee. She said that Squiggy would turn back into a frog if he kissed Sunshine, that the spell would then be broken. But Squiggy could no longer understand animal talk; he was human now. And no human would want to kiss a frog.

So Squiggy just sat by the bank of the pond wondering what to do. He could see Farmer Brown in the distance plowing a field with his tractor. Farmer Brown noticed



a person sitting by his pond so he drove there. He asked Squiggy what he was doing. Squiggy didn't know what to say, so he said he was a passerby looking for a job.

Farmer Brown needed a hired hand so he hired Squiggy and told him to follow along to the house and barn. Squiggy did the chores every day and at sunrise and sunset he would walk to the pond to look at Sunshine and to hold her in his hand. One day he accompanied Farmer Brown to town and went into a pet store. There were cats, dogs, goldfish and turtles — even frogs.

Squiggy got an idea and bought a terrarium. He took it to the pond, scooped up some mud in his hand and filled the terrarium. Then he placed a large smooth rock into it. Then he picked up Sunshine and put her on top of the rock. Squiggy carried the terrarium to his bunkhouse next to the barn and placed it beside his bed.

Everyday he would talk to Sunshine, and she would croak back. One night, a fierce lightning and thunder storm arose from the heavens. The cows in the barn were mooing and the horses neighing. But Squiggy was snoring in the bunkhouse. Farmer Brown was sound asleep in the main house. A bolt of lightning struck the barn and quickly a haystack caught on fire and soon the walls. Squiggy continued to snore.

Sunshine was panicked. She wondered how she could wake Squiggy. Then she realized that she was an amphibian. She took a giant leap from the terrarium toward Squiggy and landed right on his neck. Squiggy had a frog on his throat and woke up with a start. Sunshine started croaking. Suddenly, Squiggy saw the flames and jumped from his bed. He shouted toward the house to wake Farmer Brown.

The two of them freed all of the animals in the barn and with hoses put out the fire. Exhausted, Farmer Brown went back to bed. Squiggy went to his room and sat on the edge of the bunk. As he crawled into bed, he picked Sunshine up in his hand. "Thank you for waking me up," he said. "I wish things could be the way they were for us, but this is the next best thing." Then he bent his head down and kissed the frog on the mouth.

With a poof and shazam, the spell was broken. The hired hand started to shrink. His skin began to get rubbery. His feet became webs. His eyes bulged from his head. Soon he was the size of Sunshine. Squiggy was a frog again.

He and Sunshine were sitting on the bed next to each other. They were able to talk frog talk to one another again. They admired each other's bulging eyes and webbed feet. Sunshine explained to Squiggy about the kiss. Then the happy couple bounded off toward the pond.

The next morning, Farmer Brown wondered what had happened to his hired hand who had saved his animals and barn. He drove in his tractor around the farm and even to the pond where they first met, but saw no one.

Over time, every once in a while Farmer Brown would wonder about what had happened, and he would go to the pond and sit on the bank and think and rest, basking in the warm sun. But he never saw the hired hand again, only two happy frogs playing in the water, the mud and on the rocks with a bunch of tadpoles in tow.

Ah, to have the simple, quiet life of frogs, thought the farmer. They never have a care in the world.



# Beegle Buffet

By Louise Fufeld

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“It’s weird how Wrinkie respects bees now,” my sister, Alice, said. We had just finished dinner, and Wrinkie and his mother, Terry The Terrier, listened to our conversation from their exile in the living room. At the word “bees,” Wrinkie furrowed his normally smooth brow.

Just last week, Wrinkie was traipsing through the yard. If an uppity bee got in his way, he would give it a swift kick to the thorax and send it skidding across the cement. This treatment disturbed their digestion and tarnished their dignity.

One brave bee, named Norma, knew that Wrinkie was



half Beagle and had an acute sense of smell and poor eyesight. The next day, she flew into the garbage and found a piece of old cheese, which she rolled in. Then she he picked up a stinger from a deceased bee and planted herself right in Wrinkie's path. Wrinkie was about to kick Norma out of his way when he had a sudden doubt as to her bee-ness. This bee-sized object appeared to be a lovely bouquet of moldy cheddar.

As Norma tumbled into Wrinkie's stomach she gave him a swift prick with the stinger from the dead bee, and Wrinkie promptly regurgitated this gastric irritant. Norma flew off, and Wrinkie began to swell.

Wrinkie ran to the kitchen where he silently begged my mother for help. He looked up at her out of his saucer-sized, brown eyes while inflating like a Hormel frank. His typically wafer-thin ears were starting to look like fat, chocolate-colored hamsters when my mom realized what had probably happened. She got an anti-hystamine from the cupboard and popped one down his throat. He shrank like a pricked balloon.

"This is why," I said, "Wrinkie has acquired a robust respect for his stinging yardmates. If a bee gets in his way these days, she is carefully avoided — and sometimes offered a flower."

# *House a Home*

By Richard Rea

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I have been thinking about an analogy between a house and the human body. Let me see if I can set this up to make sense and to establish a conclusion from this form of reasoning. As I was thinking of this analogy I remembered a line from a poem published by Edgar A. Guest that stated:

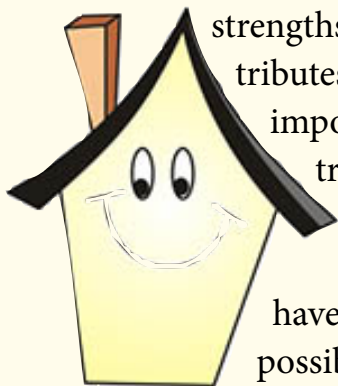
“It takes a heap o’ livin’ t’ make a house a make a home.”

With this idea I began to think of all the different facets it takes to construct a house. When I use the term house, I mean any type of structure that fulfills the function of enclosing someone. It may be made from most any type of material and usually has some form of foundation, walls and roof. It’s main purpose, however, is to enclose someone for living purposes.

In my thinking of a “house,” I must admit, I did have in mind the “living quarters,” most commonly found in the United States. All houses, no matter whether they were

built from the same “floor plan” are in some small way different. In other words, no two houses are the same even if they follow the same plan, and we know many houses are deliberately built to be different from any other house ever built. Some are quite large, some very small, some with wheels and others several feet above ground. They are, however, for the sake of this analogy, a house. (I do not want, at this time, to debate what may or may not make a structure a house.)

Now, what does it take to “make a house a home”? If we follow what Mr. Guest had to say, “a heap o’ livin’.” What is “a heap o’ livin’?” It means individuals living together in a house. They play, eat, sleep, argue, cry, celebrate special days and events together and memories are formed. Feelings toward each other are established. It is very difficult to live together and not acquire insight into each others’



strengths, weaknesses and other personal attributes. We know each other, and it seems impossible, in most cases, to “hide” our true self. This makes us vulnerable in many ways.

I often felt the reason people have “speech fright” is because it is impossible to “hide” one’s true self when

they begin to talk. Who and what we are becomes revealed by what we say, how we say it and our voice quality. (We are often labeled, good or bad, by our accent.)

So, this “heap” of living is made up of many facets. It begins early in the lives of the individuals living together and grows in depth and breadth. Try as we might, at times, we really never lose many of these personal qualities. If anything, these personal qualities become engrained in who and what we do and this is what it takes to make a “home.” It is this living that makes a building (house) a home. Home then becomes the spirit or soul within the house. This is a home.

Now how does all this discussion about what makes a house a home relate to the human body? Think about it a minute. With some exceptions, when we are born, we each follow a basic floor plan. We have a shape made up of skin and bones and no two individuals are exactly alike. Some are male and some are female. Some are tall, some short, some strong and some with special talents for the arts or other activities. This basic form houses the brain and organs that make the individual a person. Take away the life support organs and all that is left are skin and bones or, as in the house take away the individuals living together, and all you have are the boards and nails. The person then be-

comes the spirit or soul of the individual. This is a person.

The difference then, between a house and home and the human body and a person is the spirit or soul.

“Hi, I’m home!” was a habitual greeting of mine.

Such a statement can mean so much to a person returning home. I always felt that when I made this statement and received a “hi” in return, that everything was OK. It was a way family members said: “I love you and glad you are home.”

It seems in today’s world that we go about our lives in a vacuum. We assume that being present is enough. We often do not feel the need to overtly express our feelings. It is almost like one should be “pleased” just because we are present. You owe me for being here.

I may have been one of the lucky people, but I always felt I was loved and family members were happy when I said: “Hi, I’m home.” There was seldom a great fuss or celebration when I announced “I’m home,” but I did feel I had been missed. This happened when I had been gone for a short or extended period of time. I can still remember the welcomed look and teary eyes of my mother when I walked in the house and said, “Hi, I’m home” after almost four years in the U.S. Navy. I was so thankful to be there, and her actions let me know she was overjoyed to welcome me home.

This habit of announcing my arrival continued during 55 years of married life to the same woman. I made it a habit of always telling her where I was going and when to expect me home. When I returned and walked into the house, I would say: “Hi, I’m home.” Her reply always made me feel she was glad that I was home. Any problems that may have developed during my absence would be delayed for a time to give me a chance to enjoy homecoming.

I never really knew how much I looked forward to the feeling of being welcomed home until after my wife died. I had been gone for some reason and, out of habit, when I came in the front door, I announced, “Hi, I’m home.” Loneliness greeted me and is my constant companion.